United Nations A/66/PV.124

General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

124th plenary meeting
Friday, 3 August 2012, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Agenda item 34 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

Draft resolution (A/66/L.57*)

The President: Before we proceed, I would like to remind members that the debate on agenda item 34 and its sub-item (a) will take place at a later date, to be announced.

Members will recall that, under agenda item 34, the Assembly adopted resolution 66/253, at its 97th plenary meeting, held on 16 February, and heard a report by the Secretary-General, in accordance with paragraph 12 of that resolution, on the implementation of the resolution at its 99th plenary meeting, on 2 March.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

We are meeting at a time of unprecedented violence in the Syrian Arab Republic. Recently, Syrian Government forces intensified their military operations against areas presumed to be strongholds of anti-Government armed groups, in particular the cities of Damascus and Aleppo. Gross violations of human rights are occurring on a daily basis, in the context of increasingly militarized fighting. The League of Arab States, the Human Rights Council and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have repeatedly stated that those acts may amount to crimes against humanity and other international crimes.

I am deeply concerned about this horrifying escalation. I condemn the continued widespread atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law by the Syrian authorities. There are horrifying reports of mass killings, rape, extrajudicial executions torture and the deliberate targeting of civilians. All parties to the conflict have responsibilities to adhere to under international law. Those responsible must be held accountable.

It is time to act. Words are not enough. The international community has the responsibility to act without further delay. I deeply regret that the Security Council has again been unable to unite and take collective action to put an immediate end to the appalling crisis in Syria. The deadlock in the Council sends the wrong signal to all parties in the Syrian conflict.

In times of deadlock, the General Assembly has a role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Today, once again, the Assembly proves its power and authority. We have to provide the necessary assistance to the people of the Syrian Arab Republic and find an all-inclusive and peaceful solution to the crisis.

The General Assembly resolution adopted on 16 February (resolution 66/253) paved the way for the appointment of Kofi Annan as the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and, subsequently, the adoption of his six-point plan. His has not been an easy task. That is why I expressed my regret as soon as I learned yesterday of Mr. Annan's intention not to renew his mandate when it expires at the end of this month.

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That announcement — which I can understand — obliges us more than ever to resolutely persevere and to take additional measures to protect the Syrian people from the continuing atrocities to which they are being subjected.

Today we build still further on resolution 66/253. The six-point plan is not being implemented. The violence is increasing. We gather today to face our responsibilities. We have no choice but to take necessary action in a credible way. The credibility of the United Nations is at stake, as is regional stability in the Middle East. The lives of thousands of innocent people depend upon our response. I urge all Member States to fulfil our task by voting in support of the draft resolution before us today.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Eight days ago, I visited Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Srebrenica represents one of the darkest chapters in the Organization's history, a time when the international community failed to protect civilians from slaughter. Partly in reaction to genocide in Srebrenica and in Rwanda, world leaders came together under the aegis of the United Nations to support the concept of the responsibility to protect. Governments renewed their commitment to protect their populations, including particularly vulnerable communities, and leaders agreed to work collectively when faced with Governments unable, or unwilling, to protect their citizens. Today, we are all witnesses to the horrors of Syria being ripped apart by violence. I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this important meeting.

As we meet here, Aleppo, one of the most ancient and storied cities in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the epicentre of a vicious battle between the Syrian Government and those who wish to replace it. The acts of brutality that are being reported may constitute crimes against humanity or war crimes. Such acts must be investigated and the perpetrators held to account.

Many thousands of Syrians have been displaced by, and are at risk from, the fighting. Many desperately need humanitarian assistance. Despite repeated verbal acceptances of the six-point plan endorsed by the Security Council, both the Government and the opposition continue to rely on weapons, not diplomacy, in the belief that they will win through violence. But there are no winners in Aleppo today — or anywhere else in the country. The losers in the escalating battle are the people of Syria.

What is especially tragic about Syria is that the current catastrophe was avoidable. Nearly 18 months ago, knowledgeable observers predicted that if the Syrian Government responded to peaceful demonstrations with brutal force, including mass roundups and torture — as in fact it did — then demonstrations would increasingly turn violent. They also predicted that the unchecked spread of violence would lead to a rise in radicalization, extremism and terrorism. We were also forewarned about the next step: a proxy war, with regional and international players arming one side or the other.

All of those dire predictions have come to pass. Now we face the grim possibility of long-term civil war, destroying Syria's rich tapestry of interwoven communities. That would have tragic implications for Syria's people and could affect stability across the region. We must not let that prediction come true. All of us have a responsibility to the people of Syria. We must use all of the peaceful means provided for in the United Nations Charter to help them unite around a Syrian-led transition process that is based on dialogue and compromise, not bullets and arrests.

I have said many times how much I regret the divisions that have paralysed action in the Security Council. On 30 June in Geneva, Foreign Ministers of the Action Group on Syria, including the five permanent members of the Council, agreed on an action plan. Now, with the situation having worsened, they must again find common ground. The immediate interests of the Syrian people must be paramount over any larger rivalries over influence.

Despite the difficulties, the United Nations is active on the ground. Through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and our country team, we continue to deliver humanitarian assistance to those whom we can reach. The United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, despite the deteriorating security environment, plays an essential role in monitoring developments. United Nations human rights officials continue to work towards documentation that can help with essential accountability. And the Joint Special Envoy, Kofi Annan, in accordance with the mandate provided by the Assembly in resolution 66/253 and by the League

Arab States in February, has sought to engage with Syrians across the political spectrum — and with those who have influence inside Syria — in an attempt to use diplomacy to end the bloodshed and move towards a Syrian-led political transition.

Yesterday I announced with deep regret the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy. Kofi Annan deserves our deepest admiration for his efforts over the past several months. He brought tremendous skill and determination to the task, and I am indebted to him and his team for all they have tried to achieve. Yet both the Government and the opposition forces spurned the hand offered to them and continue to demonstrate their determination to rely on violence. The sharp differences in the Security Council themselves made the Envoy's work more difficult.

I am consulting with League of Arab States Secretary-General Nabil El Araby on the appointment of a successor to carry on that crucial peacemaking effort. But let me be clear: mediation can only succeed when there is a commitment to solving conflict through dialogue, and real leverage to back it up. I want to praise the commitment and courage of all those in the United Nations family who are working in Syria. I shudder to think how much worse the situation would be if the United Nations were absent. I urge Member States to continue to provide support and the mandate for our work.

The conflict in Syria is a test of everything that the Organization stands for. I do not want today's United Nations to fail that test. I want us all to show the people of Syria and the world that we have learned the lessons of Srebrenica. United international pressure can make a difference. The Syrian people need action. Their aspirations have been denied. Their suffering is profound, and the increasing militarization only promises worse. The primary responsibility for stopping the violence rests with those on the ground, particularly the Government. But their refusal to lay down arms does not absolve the rest of us of the need to act. I urge all members of the Assembly to face up to the collective responsibilities we shoulder.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.57*.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting to discuss the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. I am honoured to address the General Assembly today in my capacity as Chair of the Group of Arab States and on behalf of the nearly 60 States that have joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/66/L.57*.

A few months ago, on 16 February, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/253, based on the decisions of the Arab League. Pursuant to that, Mr. Kofi Annan was appointed Joint Special Envoy on behalf of both the United Nations and the Arab League. Since then, Mr. Annan has sought a peaceful and comprehensive solution to the Syrian crisis, starting with, among other things, the six-point plan, which was followed by the establishment of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and, more recently, by the the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). During that time, Mr. Annan attempted to achieve the most basic of goals: stopping the Government killing machine, which has been slaughtering the courageous Syrian people, the use of heavy weapons and attacks on, and bombings of, residential neighbourhoods, and allowing humanitarian assistance to be delivered to hundreds of thousands of those affected.

What was the response to the six-point plan? There were six massacres: in Bab Amr, Rastan, Houla, Tremseh, Qubair and, today, Aleppo. Moreover, instead of protecting the international observers and facilitating their mission, the Syrian authorities left them in danger and in fear for their lives, leading them to pull back and take refuge in their residences. As for the political solution, it was nowhere to be found. On 11 July Mr. Annan delivered a report to the Security Council in which he held the Syrian authorities primarily responsible for the deterioration of the situation, the continued violations of human rights and the intensified military action, including the use of heavy weapons. However, when Mr. Annan appealed to the Council to demand unanimously that the Syrian Government abide by its obligations and understand that a failure to comply would have consequences, the Council's efforts were blocked by a double veto that implied that the Council was turning a blind eye to the painful reality of Syria's situation. That reality that has become a grave threat to peace and security at the regional and international levels, in addition to the contribution that these actions have made to the suffering of the Syrian people.

With that in mind, the group of sponsoring States felt obliged to bring the matter before the General Assembly to demand that it uphold its responsibilities

in the face of the Security Council's failure to deal with the crisis and respond swiftly to the Joint Special Envoy's appeal. We are therefore introducing draft resolution A/66/L.57* with the goal of reaffirming that the international community will not tolerate what is happening in Syria or accept the ongoing killings, persecution and massacres, and that it is time to launch a peaceful transfer of power in order to fulfil the aspirations of the Syrian people and preserve the blood of their children. Moreover, the draft resolution aims to guarantee the security, safety, equality, rights and duties of every sector of the Syrian people, whatever their ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliations, as well as to assert the joint responsibility of the international community for protecting Syrian citizens and maintaining international peace and security.

The most recent development in the Syrian crisis is Mr. Annan's abandonment of his mission as an expression of his frustration and impotence in the face of the Security Council's failure to give him the support, tools and means necessary for the success of his mission. In addition, the violent air and artillery attacks that Syrian troops continue to mount against the city of Aleppo while branding it an enemy make this action more important than ever. Meanwhile, the States sponsoring the draft resolution responded to the observations of various Member States during the consultative meetings by making appropriate amendments based on their suggestions and views. We therefore introduce this draft resolution in full confidence that the conscience of the world will not ignore the distress and cries of the Syrian people, who are facing the artillery and tanks head on. We urge the Assembly, in the name of the children of Bab Amr, the martyrs of Aleppo, the victims of Qubair and Houla, and Syrian men and women everywhere, to uphold its humanitarian, moral and historical responsibilities by voting with us in favour of the draft resolution.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/66/L.57, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". Before giving the floor to those who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is strangely paradoxical that the States that sponsored the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.57* have submitted it under agenda item 34, entitled "Prevention of armed conflict"; yet, by providing weapons to the terrorist groups, those same States have played a major role in weaponizing the Syrian situation and thwarting the achievement of the desired political solution. The members of the General Assembly know all about those activities. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs acknowledged as much only three days ago, when he noted that the armed groups,

> "are being supplied with weapons. According to the information we have, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and probably others are supplying weapons."

Various Western media sources have confirmed the same, adding that American anti-aircraft Stinger missiles had been delivered to the armed groups via Turkey.

In addition, some sponsors of the draft resolution have been leading a hysterical, politicized media and intelligence campaign against my country. They have provided all sorts of financial and logistical support to the armed terrorist groups, while supplying nothing of the sort to the honest, peaceful and legitimate domestic opposition. Those States have also provided the armed groups with political and media support and enforced unilateral sanctions that not only conflict with the six-point plan, but also constitute an unjust and illegitimate siege against the Syrian nation, in violation of relevant United Nations resolutions.

Those actions have exacerbated the same humanitarian situation on the ground that certain parties have lamented in their statements. If those same States that have expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Syria were sincerely concerned, they would have allocated the billions of dollars spent on financing and arming terrorist groups and providing them with communication systems and lethal equipment towards humanitarian assistance instead. It should be noted that all of the promises made by those States with respect to providing humanitarian assistance were no more than a distraction to make the Syrian Government appear as the obstacle to such assistance. No one in Syria has seen any evidence of such assistance so far, in spite of an agreement made several months ago with the United Nations concerning the humanitarian response plan.

At the same time, the greatest fallacy is that certain sponsors of the draft resolution — including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar — can in no way, shape or form be considered as bastions of democracy and

respect for human rights. Those States are governed by despotic oligarchies that have not hesitated in oppressing their people and killing peaceful protesters both within and outside their borders. The level of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in those countries is considered to be among the worst in the world, according to well-documented reports issued by international human rights and legal institutions, as well as by members of the Saudi Arabian, Baharaini and Qatari opposition both in those countries and among the diasporas.

Moreover, other States sponsoring the draft resolution include major contributors to the deliberate deterioration of the situation in Syria. They lack any credibility with respect to compliance with United Nations resolutions, given previous experiences that have confirmed that those States manipulated many resolutions that they themselves crafted to suit their own interests and to create excuses for military intervention in other States. Such excuses have included eliminating weapons of mass destruction and protecting civilians and human rights, along with many other important humanitarian principles. Those were in fact never truly their objectives, but merely slogans used to intervene in the affairs of other States, force change in systems of Government, and push States into civil war, sectarian conflict and general chaos.

In that respect, we draw the attention of Member States to the danger of subjecting this international Organization to media-generated financial and political pressure. In that manner, those same States have provided cover for the spread of religiously sanctioned terrorism throughout the world and for underminig stability and security. We also wish to highlight the danger of having the Organization contribute to efforts to convey some kind of legitimacy to agendas that have resulted in eroding the confidence of Member States in the rule of law at the international level, especially after the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and the manipulation of the fate of many developing countries, especially in Africa.

Syria has experienced a series of suicide terrorist attacks in the course of the current crisis. The relevant Syrian authorities have succeeded in arresting and killing a large number of Arab and non-Arab terrorists belonging to Al-Qaida and other Salafi and Wahabi extremist groups that are ideologically and intellectually affiliated with Al-Qaida. The paradox there is that some of the countries that have continuously denounced terrorism and the activities of Al-Qaida and have waged war under the same slogan are today, directly or indirectly, supporting the increasing terrorist activities of Al-Qaida and other extremist terrorist groups in Syria, in an effort to create chaos. It is no longer a secret that some States have facilitated, financed and incited the sending of terrorists to Syria from all over the world. From that perspective we can understand how the sponsors of the draft resolution have deliberately avoided any reference to those terrorists in the draft resolution, for in so doing they would have had to denounce themselves, before denouncing the terrorists.

Many Western countries that are combating so-called terrorist sleeper cells in their territories are at the same time awakening similar terrorist sleeper cells in Syria. Some Arab, regional and internationally well-known States have been carrying out public organized campaigns to incite violence and terrorist acts in Syria, despite it being well known that all of the domestic criminal statutes of Member States stipulate that the instigator of a crime shall receive a punishment equal to that of the perpetrator. Also, resolutions of the United Nations and international conventions, especially those related to criminal justice and the fight against terrorism, stipulate that States, groups and individuals that incite violence and terrorism should be criminalized as well. In addition, the Holy Koran itself states that, when it comes to inciting murder and discord,God says that discord and internal dissent are worse than acts of murder.

The question that we all must address here today, therefore, is whether the intention of the draft resolution before the Assembly truly is to implement national and international laws in order to hold accountable those involved in inciting terrorism and violence and causing the murder of Syrians and the destruction of property and infrastructure in an attempt to sow discord and provoke internal fighting among Syrians.

In line with the issues I have mentioned, it is no surprise that today we find ourselves faced with a draft resolution that, at best, can be described as misleading and hysterical. The draft resolution violates all principles of international law, first and foremost the principles of respect for national sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

It is therefore clear that the adoption of the draft resolution would send the wrong message to the extremists and terrorists in Syria and beyond, in particular that the terrorist acts that they are undertaking

instead of dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes have the support and the encouragement of Member States. That will escalate the violence and foster terrorism both in Syria and throughout the region. Terrorism will certainly extend to those areas that have fostered terrorism, including some States that are sponsors of the draft resolution.

We therefore request that the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.57* be put to the vote. We call on all States not to be an indirect partner in supporting chaos and terrorism, in intervening in the internal affairs of States and in trying to legitimize unilateral sanctions. We appeal to all participants to vote against the draft resolution for all the reasons I have mentioned, in support of the principles that we all uphold, including the sovereign equality of all States and the right of peoples to self-determination and to choose their political systems free of any outside interference.

We had expected the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to submit for consideration a draft resolution on the its Red Sea islands of Sanafir and Tiran, which are occupied by Israel, rather than one intent on manipulating the status and fate of Palestinian refugees in Syria and on shedding crocodile tears over what he called the blood of the Syrian nation, which we hold very dear to our hearts.

The incitement to murder has reached a level whereby Saudi Arabian and Qatari media are no longer satisfied with targeting my country but have attacked me personally and members of my family in an immoral, unethical and shameful way. I stand here proud to defend the interests of my nation against all conspiracies against my country, whatever they may be. The same media have attacked me in special programmes, lasting several hours, that have included fabricated lies and false statements intended to destroy the reputation of members of my family. They have even used social media sites to incite the killing of Syrians inside and outside Syria. Is that how we combat terrorism? Is that how diplomatic work is carried out? Is that what diplomacy is all about?

All participants are ambassadors defending the interests of their countries. Diplomacy is one thing, but having members of one's family targeted on that account is something else entirely. I leave that to the consciences of all members. I should also like to say that I and various other Syrian diplomats have received murder threats emanating from websites in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United States.

Allow me to conclude by saying that you, Mr. President, have taken a predetermined position on the draft resolution in form and content. We find that to be a violation of rule 106 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which requires the President of the General Assembly to be impartial and to conduct the meeting without intervention on any draft resolution. However, unfortunately, you, Mr. President, have violated that provision for possibly the tenth time during your presidency.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution before us (A/66/L.57*) is an intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign and independent State. It proposes setting up protection mechanisms against a sovereign country, namely, the Syrian Arab Republic. The draft resolution lacks objectivity. It describes a long list of acts abrogating human rights attributed to the Government of Syria, but minimizes or conceals the violations of human rights by terrorist groups and the armed opposition.

The draft resolution ignores the political and constitutional reforms promoted by the Syrian Government towards an inclusive, democratic and peaceful national agreement in order to meet the hopes for change of the Syrian people and the Arab people in general. Every sovereign State has the legitimate right to defend its national security and to protect the public and private property of its country. If the rule of law is to be respsected at the national and international levels, that right cannot be denied or violated.

The Syrian Government is not facing a democratic opposition that uses peaceful and constitutional means to achieve its goals. As we know, it is an opposition that practices and supports terrorism and that survives through foreign support. That armed opposition refuses to participate in the democratic and pluralistic dialogue that we, as peace-lovers, encourage in the world.

The only viable option to put an end to the armed violence in Syria, in all its forms, is through a sincere and inclusive political dialogue. In that regard, a ceasefire that contributes to the goal of peace and the reconciliation of that brotherly Arab people must immediately be established. We support all initiatives in pursuit of peace and the peaceful settlement of the disputes in Syria.

Venezuela has supported the six-point plan proposed by Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. That

plan retains all its validity. We regret the resignation of Kofi Annan. Warmongers and those who favour military intervention sabotaged his efforts for peace. We reiterate the need to implement that plan without delay, regardless of who is appointed to replace him.

We welcome the diplomatic efforts of the Russian Federation that led to the holding of the meeting of the Action Group for Syria on 30 June in Geneva. Venezuela supports the positions taken by Russia, China and other countries that defend the principles of sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We commend them for opposing foreign intervention and for advocating a Syrian-led solution to the issues of that sovereign nation.

With regard to the attacks against Syria, on 1 August President Hugo Chávez Frías denounced those Governments that have not abandoned their imperialist attempts to impose their forms of Government on the peoples of the South, and asserted that Venezuela recognized President Bashar Al-Assad and his Government and not the terrorists who are engaged in bombings.

Venezuela is extremely concerned about interventionist initiatives in the internal affairs of the Syrian nation. It is deplorable to see the sponsoring of international political events that bring together Syrian political opponents who include representatives of groups that support or engage in violence or terrorism. The financing and arming of these opposition groups from abroad should be condemned. Those practices violate the most elementary principles of international law and constitute a de facto diplomatic recognition of political groups operating outside the law and defy the legal institutions of the Syrian State. They are a flagrant violation to the sovereignty of a country and of the principles that govern international law, as expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. If such practices were to continue, they would promote the establishment of the law of the jungle in international relations. The Government of my country calls for an in-depth reflection on the dire consequences that could arise from such practices in future diplomatic relations between sovereign countries.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela strongly appeals for respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of a sovereign country, and demands an end to foreign intervention in the Syrian Arab Republic. We call for respect for the human rights of all Syrians, regardless of their political position, ethnicity or religious beliefs. We reject unilateral and extraterritorial measures aimed at imposing new sanctions and suffering on the Syrian people. History has shown that sanctions and foreign intervention in the internal affairs of States do not solve the problems that affect such countries, but, on the contrary, compound them. We urge the relevant agencies of the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the violence in that brotherly Arab country. Such assistance must be provided urgently, in respect for its sovereignty and hence in coordination with the authorities of that country.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, consistent with its principled position of respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, will vote against draft resolution A/66/L.57*.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba will vote against draft resolution A/66/L.57* because we believe that it would not help in any way to resolve the situation that is tearing the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic apart but could, on the contrary, lead to greater instability and violence. It is a biased draft resolution that selectively addresses current events in that country and that could even open the door to foreign military intervention, of which we have had unfortunate experience in the recent past.

Cuba believes that an end must be put to all acts of violence, massacres and terrorist actions that have taken innocent lives in Syria. However, for that purpose, the transfer of weapons and money to and the training of insurgency groups must end; such actions have become the open, daily practice of the United States Government and its European allies in order to defeat sovereign Governments by force. That is the clearest manifestation of the policy in favour of regime change prevailing in Washington, D.C., and other NATO capitals.

The media manipulation must also end. We view with concern how the Western media empires are openly interpreting the situation in Syria for political purposes, thus inciting worse and more brutal bloodshed.

Let there be no mistake — Cuba condemns the deaths of innocent persons wherever they may occur, and condemns foreign interference in the internal affairs of States. Cuba has always supported and

today reaffirms the right of the Syrian people to the full enjoyment of self-determination and sovereignty without foreign manipulation or intervention of any kind.

Mr. Laher (South Africa): South Africa deplores the violence and the tremendous loss of life in Syria, which are fast spiralling out of control. We are alarmed by the latest developments on the ground. The increase in the levels of violence being perpetrated by both sides, including the use of heavy weapons, is shocking and should be condemned. In that climate, the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria is regretted.

My delegation joins others in conveying our deepest sympathy to the Syrian people for the significant loss of life and the mass displacement of the population.

We appreciate the efforts of regional actors, including the League of Arab States, and of the United Nations agencies, the International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in assisting to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population. We remind the Assembly that the International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies recently classified the situation in Syria as meeting the conditions of an internal armed conflict. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also stated that there are indications that the situation in Syria, at least in certain areas, may amount to a non-international armed conflict, thus entailing obligations on both sides under international law. In such conditions all parties have responsibilities and obligations under international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, in a complex, divided society such as Syria's there can be no military solution. Ultimately, the parties in Syria will have to negotiate a settlement. The question is whether they do so now or after a bloody and protracted war. We are therefore deeply disappointed that the Security Council has not been able to apply pressure to both sides to bring an end to the violence and to comply with their respective obligations under the six-point plan. The only way to achieve a solution reflective of the will of the people of Syria is through an all-inclusive political process.

We support the idea of the General Assembly speaking with one voice through a resolution. However, we maintain that draft resolution A/66/L.57* could have been much more balanced, to accurately reflect the actual situation on the ground. The draft resolution should have been clearer in recognizing that there are two or more sides to the Syrian crisis. An unbalanced resolution of the Assembly may be viewed as supporting one side over the other.

South Africa reiterates that there are obligations on all parties to cease the violence and to comply with the six-point plan. While bearing in mind that the Syrian Government bears the primary responsibility to halt violence, the draft resolution is not strong enough in its call on the armed opposition groups to refrain from violence and to comply with their requirements under the six-point plan. Mediation efforts in conflict situations are not served by pressuring only one side of a conflict.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General said that the United Nations remained committed to diplomacy in pursuing an end to violence and a Syrian-led solution that meets the legitimate democratic aspirations of its people. Additionally, a few weeks ago, the Joint Special Envoy himself requested the Security Council to send a strong message to all parties that there would be consequences for non-compliance with the six-point plan. South Africa supports stern action by the United Nations in support of that process, in line with the recommendations of the Joint Special Envoy, to ensure that a message is sent to all sides that they should engage with the Envoy's mediation process.

Despite our misgivings about some aspects of the text, and in the light of the urgency of resolving the Syrian crisis, we believe that it is necessary for the United Nations to speak with one voice in taking action.

Mr. Archondo (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia would like to explain to the Assembly the reasons behind its intention to vote against draft resolution A/66/L.57*, which is before us today.

The Syrian people are living through a painful and bloody period. No one in the Hall can remain indifferent to the suffering of a people caught in the crossfire. It is the duty of the United Nations to answer that people's call and to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. Indeed, we all agree that Syria is an open wound that must be treated as soon as possible. The issue has ceased to be a regional or local one; it has morphed into an issue the gravity of which touches us all.

While the Organization must indeed take action, its limits are obvious, as clearly defined in Article 2 of the

United Nations Charter, which forbids it to intervene in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. Bolivia believes that the draft resolution before us goes well beyond Article 2 of the Charter. That is why we reject it.

Nevertheles, we are pleased to participate in this debate on the situation in Syria, if only for a few minutes. Our first question is how the United Nations can meaningfully contribute to a solution to the political crisis in Syria. We believe that today's draft resolution would make matters worse. With all respect to those who support it, Bolivia believes that draft resolution A/66/L.57* goes down the wrong path. If adopted, it will not lead to solutions but, on the contrary, may exacerbate problems. That is because the main concern behind the draft resolution is not to end the violence but rather to break the Damascus Government. Anyone who does not agree with that has only to read. The draft resolution accuses the Syrian Government 14 times of committing the most serious crimes imaginable. It accuses the Government of massacres, arbitrary executions, murders, persecutions, detentions, disappearances, impeding access to medical treatment, torture, rape and preventing the burial of the dead. It paints a picture of a Government that attacks the civilian population in an indiscriminate, savage way.

The draft resolution 14 times accuses the Syrian Government of multiple crimes, but makes only one negative reference to the opposition in that country, saying it has committed a few human rights abuses. There is not one word about the terrorist attack that ended the life of Syria's Minster of Defence on 18 July. There is not one word about the clandestine transport of arms across borders with neighbouring States. There is not one word about the so-called Free Syrian Army, generously supported by Powers interested in the overthrow of the Damascus Government. There is not one word about the role of the Central Intelligence Agency or of Al-Qaida. There is not one word about the armed campaign to sow the seeds of a civil war, richly fueled from outside and in. There is not one word about the arrival in Syria of terrorist groups intent on imposing an Islamic State in the region.

There is no State machinery in place in Syria to liquidate the civilian population. What there is in Syria is an armed confrontation between regular State forces and non-State actors financed and armed from abroad. The draft resolution does not mention that reality. It does not say how peace might be achieved in Syria once the so-called political transition is set in motion. It does not tell us how the civil war it promotes can be prevented from spinning out of control into a scenario of indiscriminate sectarian violence, enflaming the entire region. It does not explain how Syria can avoid falling into the chaos that Iraq lived through and continues to live under after Saddam Hussein's fall. It says nothing about the possibility that various armed factions may take control of the territory, filling the power gap. Syria is not on the path of the Arab Spring. On the contrary, it seems to be on the road to chaos and civil war. The United Nations should not contribute to that.

Let us not fool ourselves. The draft resolution is aimed mainly at breaking the back of the Damascus Government. Those who do not believe that should read the text. Outrageously, the draft resolution mentions eight times the need to drive forward a political transition towards a new Government. Not only does it tell the Syrian people what they must do, but it gives them the exact recipe — a democratic, multi-party, pluralistic political system. Even worse, it asks the General Assembly to believe in the unity and cohesion of the opposition forces.

Finally, the Bolivian delegation regrets the fact that this issue has been brought before the General Assembly in the way it has, that is, after the Security Council has failed in its own consideration. This is not appropriate. It is being done very hurriedly, without seeking due consensus, in a mere three days, and without hearing all points of view. Does this represent love of democracy on the part of those who claim to be its main defenders? Is it the way to teach the Syrian people what democracy is and that it is something to be desired?

Because of the way in which it is being adopted, and because we find its content not only unsatisfactory but alarming, Bolivia rejects draft resolution A/66/L.57*. In that spirit, we call on countries that are members of the Southern Cone Common Market to follow the decision taken on 29 July by our heads of State, who affirmed that the principles governing the settlement of the crisis in Syria should be dialogue, political negotation and respect for human rights, territorial sovereignty, non-intervention, the free self-determination of peoples and territorial integrity.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Since the General Assembly's adoption in February of resolution 66/253 concerning Syria, we now find ourselves facing a very critical situation and great change. That change is not a positive one;

it is very negative. Its impact is particularly negative on the entire region of the Middle East. It will lead to eventual disaster. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to express its deep concern about this and to once again clarify its principled position, in order to address the Syrian issue fairly and peacefully.

First, sovereignty should be respected and fully observed. The Charter stipulates that sovereignty is the fundamental key factor in United Nations affairs. The Syrian Arab Republic is a full-fledged Member State, and President Bashar Al-Assad's Government is a democratically elected Government.

Secondly, the principle of non-interference should be respected. We have seen many instances in which interference has had a disastrous impact; we do not have to look far, but merely shift the focus slightly from Syria to some of its neighbours. Military intervention and military interference have unleashed sectarian violence, terrorist conflicts, armed conflict and the mass killing of innocent civilians. That has been the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States talks a great deal about the so-called protection of civilians, but what is it doing in Iraq and Afghanistan? It is essential that we look at that important factor. All the United States wants is regime change. Once regime change has occurred, it does not care what happens; it does not care whether civilians or terrorists are killing each other. It is only about regime change. Draft resolution A/66/L.57* is closely related to that. The Security Council vetoed the draft resolution sponsored by the United States (S/2012/538).

Thirdly, the only way to settle this issue is through political dialogue and by peaceful means. The Syrian people are the only people who know what is in their best interests. Killing each other is not helping, and outside interference cannot solve that problem. Outside interference, as I indicated when referring to Iraq and Afghanistan, only kills civilians. Beyond that example, when the same country talks of protection of civilians it is nothing but hypocrisy. The political dialogue should be a Syrian-led process aimed at improving the future, the happiness and the stability of the people.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been closely following the developments in the war currently raging in the Syrian Arab Republic. We have been alarmed and revolted by the scenes and stories emanating from that war. The small but vibrant Syrian and Lebanese community within our country is also directly and often personally affected by the spiraling violence and atrocities in Syria, particularly as the war has moved to the major cities of Damascus and Aleppo.

On 31 May, the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines made a statement to our national Parliament condemning the massacre that took place in the region of Houla in western Syria, and calling unequivocally for the perpetrators to be held accountable and brought to justice. It is in that spirit of genuine outrage, alarm and revulsion that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views the current draft resolution on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/66/L.57*).

Today's draft resolution has many positive elements that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines enthusiastically supports. We share its concern for the civilian victims of this war, particularly the innocent women and children who have been killed or victimized by the warring parties. We are similarly concerned about the influx of Syrian refugees to neighbouring States. Above all, we echo the draft resolution's expression of profound regret at the thousands of deaths, and extend heartfelt condolences to the families affected.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also wholeheartedly endorses the reaffirmation of support for the six-point peace plan delineated by outgoing Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan and the commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. We likewise condemn any and all human rights abuses being committed by any party in Syria, and support efforts towards extending humanitarian assistance to the affected populations. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also strongly reiterates the importance of the draft resolution's call for political dialogue and the peaceful settlement of this spiraling conflict, which does not appear to have a military solution.

However, other aspects of the draft resolution give us pause, and lead us to question whether our laudable desire to speak and act on this matter has caused us to overlook many of the indisputable facts on the ground of this conflict, and many of the principles that undergird the Organization. Primarily, we are concerned about the obvious omissions from the draft resolution that create not only a lack of balance, but a far more troubling implication that our silence amounts

to consent or endorsement of certain actions and actors. It is a documented fact, for example, that elements of the opposition forces have opted to assassinate members of the Syrian Government, either individually or through the use of crude bombs that also murder innocent civilians. Surely the international community cannot catalogue the violations of the Syrian authorities while turning a blind eye to the type of despicable terrorism that we have condemned in every other context and every other nation.

We are also aware of the indisputable presence and activity of Al-Qaida and other extremists in Syria, and their role in some of the anti-Government activity. We must unambiguously condemn this element in the conflict, for history has taught us the danger of ignoring Al-Qaida when its interests may align, however fleetingly, with those of other, more civilized actors. Instead of outright condemnation of the barbaric elements, the draft resolution encourages cohesion among all elements of the Syrian opposition, many of whom the international community knows nothing about. There are many principled and patriotic Syrians who seek to staunchly oppose the Government through peaceful and legitimate means. It is irresponsible for us to ask those groups to find common cause with those extremists and terrorists who may also clothe themselves in the opposition banner.

Similarly, we note that the draft resolution has been submitted under agenda item 34, "Prevention of armed conflict". As such, we feel it imperative that the draft resolution to acknowledge the role played by many States in exacerbating and intensifying the armed conflict in Syria through the provision of arms and ammunition to all sides in the war. The international community cannot call for the prevention of armed conflict without confronting the continuing role played by those who persist in arming and supplying all of the combatants. If we are honest about seeking an end to hostilities, it is our collective responsibility to call on the arms suppliers to cease their trade in the tools of death. Our silence on that crucial point is tantamount to an endorsement and encouragement of illicit arms traders, and runs counter to the spirit of the recently-concluded month-long effort to secure a global arms trade treaty.

We cannot simply pay lip service to the ideas of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference. They are the principles upon which the Assembly is founded. If it is that we seek to depart from those principles, it must not be done with a nod and a wink or benign neglect, but with a frank examination of their applicability in our modern context.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also concerned about the failure to call for a simultaneous ceasefire and pullback by Government and opposition forces and militias alike. To call for the Administration to withdraw its forces to its barracks in the face of advancing opposition forces in Damascus and Aleppo is to ask the authorities to cede control of those cities as a prerequisite for political dialogue. Such a position seems to reflect neither the military realities on the ground nor a genuine desire to craft a workable solution to the war.

There are other aspects of concern. For example, the responsibility to protect is a concept whose contours and full implications have neither been defined nor agreed upon by the United Nations. Its inclusion in the preamble of the draft resolution is unnecessarily divisive at a time when unity should be our objective.

We note also the draft resolution's call in paragraph 16 for the establishment of "a democratic, pluralistic political system, in which all citizens are equal". Saint Vincent and the Grenadines proudly possesses such a political system, which we work tirelessly to improve and consolidate. As such, we have considerable sympathy for the sentiment captured by such a call. However, we are unclear as to whether the General Assembly has the legal, moral or historical authority to externally impose any political system upon the citizens of another State.

Given those concerns and despite our unambiguous support for many of the key pillars of the draft resolution, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines must regrettably abstain in today's voting. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines agonized long and hard over the decision to abstain, and we regret that an opportunity has been missed today for the General Assembly to speak with one voice on the conflict, which we all deplore and which we all want to end as quickly and as peacefully as possible. Even in the light of the welcome recent changes made to the text, our failure to make the extra effort to craft a draft resolution that could enjoy near unanimous support is even more regrettable in the wake of yesterday's statements by the outgoing Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, Kofi Annan, in which he cited the disunity of the international community as one of the factors contributing to the deepening crisis in Syria. Special Envoy Annan made clear that the international

community must be balanced in its pronouncements and united in its approach if we are to save Syria from further bloodshed. It is in those areas — balance and unity — that we feel that more work could have been done to capture our collective horror and desire for change. Similarly, Mr. Annan's other underlying message — that authorities who show little concern for the loss of their citizens' lives will lose the moral authority to govern — is also an essential point to which Saint Vincent and the Grenadines readily subscribes.

Today, even while abstaining, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines adds its voice to the chorus of responsible States calling for, first, the immediate cessation of all violence between and among all parties to the conflict; secondly, the commencement of an inclusive political process geared towards a locally crafted and negotiated solution to the conflict; and, thirdly, the avoidance of any actions by other parties that will exacerbate the violence, make a negotiated solution more difficult, or serve as a pretext for military intervention or undue external influence in the sovereign affairs of States.

Our abstention must be taken neither as support for the Syrian authorities nor as an endorsement of the opposition's methods. Instead, it is a call for balance, compromise and unity. As such, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its support for a peaceful solution to the war that is not motivated by geopolitical or strategic interests, but instead driven by the honest desire to end a catastrophic human tragedy and the need to honour the memory of the tens of thousands of Syrians who have needlessly and tragically died in the conflict.

Mr. Morejón (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador views with concern the deterioration of the human rights situation and the crisis in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. On several occasions, we have expressed our consternation at the serious human rights violations that have taken place since the beginning of the crisis. We have condemned them and insisted that they should not enjoy impunity and that the perpetrators of the acts of violence and those who provide arms and munitions to the various actors, including organized terrorist groups, be punished.

Today Ecuador reiterates its firm condemnation of human rights violations, wheresoever they may arise. We express our solidarity with the Syrian people, in particular the victims of the widespread violence and their families. We regret the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, and hope that the original six-point plan will endure and that the parties will contribute to its implementation with an immediate cessation of violence. We reject the attempt through draft resolution A/66/L.57* to change the mandate of Special Envoy Annan, focusing it on a political objective that promotes the agenda of some sectors and not the needed ceasefire.

Ecuador is concerned over the imbalance in the language of the draft resolution, which does not sufficiently take all the parties responsible for the crisis into account, and tends to polarize the conflict without contributing to a solution in which all Syrians participate and peace is restored in the context of a strict respect for the sovereignty and independence of Syria.

My delegation insists that matters related to the human rights situation should be addressed by the Human Rights Council in Geneva, which is the competent body. Submitting such a draft resolution to the General Assembly in New York only contributes to politicizing the issue and does not truly help the the victims of armed violence in Syria.

I raise these considerations in order to indicate that the delegation of Ecuador has instructions to abstain in the voting.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation has asked for the floor to explain its position with regard to the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.57* before the voting.

In the view of my delegation, the draft resolution is a deviation from all the efforts being pursued at the international level for a peaceful resolution to the Syrian crisis. The draft resolution is also a deviation from the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which prohibit interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. The draft resolution echoes the malicious desire of certain countries to topple the Government of Syria. That is an illegal action and condemnable by international law. It is only the Syrian people who should decide on their political fate.

The draft resolution fails to address the disastrous consequences of the different forms of foreign intervention. Such interventions, in terms of the arms and the sophisticated equipment that are being sent

across the borders to the rebels, have exacerbated the crisis in Syria. That has added fuel to the fire, leading to the deepening of the political and security crisis, with all its ramifications for the region. In recent months, many terrorist attacks have occurred in Syria, the latest of which took the lives of a number of senior officials in Damascus.

The operations by armed groups in Aleppo in the past couple of days have already left a heavy toll in human lives and property. The draft resolution fails to hold the armed groups and the terrorist groups led by Al-Qaida accountable for their activities and falls short of condemning foreign interference and the acts of violence by terrorists. It is clear who is behind arming and financing the armed and terrorist groups in Syria, some of whom are, regrettably, among the sponsors of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution encourages Member States to impose sanctions on Syria at a time when people in the affected areas are in dire need of basic living necessities. The call for sanctions constitutes collective punishment against the Syrian people. What is needed instead is a call on States to freeze any arms, financial and logistical support to the armed groups in Syria.

We very much regret that Mr. Kofi Annan has decided to end his work by the end of this month. We of course understand the reasons for his decision and the arduous position that he faced in advancing his mission. It is not a hidden fact that, after the recent meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.6810), some permanent members rushed to pronounce the mission of the Special Envoy as dead and indicated that they would immediately pursue other means than the Security Council to overthrow the Government in Syria.

That approach is a blatant interference in Syrian internal affairs. We hope that, in the remaining days of his tenure, Mr. Annan will rigorously continue to pursue the goal of finding a peaceful political settlement to the Syrian crisis. We also hope that his replacement will work along the same lines and within the same mandate, which is to find a non-violent solution to the crisis. It is only through such a process that broader political reconciliation, national unity, public order, stability and prosperity are realizable for the Syrian people.

We are very concerned about the regional consequences of the continuation of violence and about any violation of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity. We encourage the political parties to engage in political dialogue with the Syrian Government in order to find a peaceful political process. In that regard, we reiterate our readiness to host talks between the Syrian Government and the opposition parties.

As we have stated on other occasions, Syria has historically played an important role in the Middle East. Prolonged instability and unrest in Syria would have adverse consequences for peace and stability in the Middle East region. We should all work together for a comprehensive, effective and practical way to help find a peaceful resolution to the present crisis in Syria. The draft resolution in its present wording, despite some changes in the language, is still unbalanced and one-sided and does not reflect the reality of the situation in Syria. It conveys the wrong message on behalf of the Assembly. We are therefore not in a position to support the draft resolution, and we will vote against it.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): The Bahamas will support draft resolution A/66/L.57* because we believe that the welfare and safety of the people of Syria should be the paramount concern of this body and, indeed, of all bodies that make up the United Nations system.

The killings and bloodshed, as well as the human rights abuses inflicted on the people of Syria, particularly on the civilian population, must stop. The forces on the ground, both Government and opposition, in conjunction with civil society, must seek to carry out a dialogue on instituting a political process from which will evolve an agreed mechanism for moving the country in the direction of peace, security and development under the stewardship of a representative, democratic and inclusive Government. It is my delegation's conviction that the implementation of the Annan six-point plan remains the best starting point for that process.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to commend and express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Joint Special Envoy, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his unstinting and tireless efforts in trying to bring about a resolution to the crisis in Syria. His recent resignation is indeed regrettable. The Bahamas is of the view that, with the appropriate and sustained support of the international community, his could well have been a mission possible with concrete results that would have spared the people of Syria so much suffering. The Bahamas is convinced that that should remain the objective of the international community. We hope that the adoption of this draft resolution will be step in that direction.

It is unconscionable that the international community should find itself stymied in the face of such suffering and turmoil.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/66/L.57*, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.57*, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: the Comoros, France, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mauritania, Micronesia, Montenegro, the Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino and Switzerland.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Burundi, Ecuador, Eritrea, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam

Draft resolution A/66/L.57 was adopted by 133 votes to 12, with 31 abstentions* (resolution 66/253 B).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote following the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Chile feels duty-bound to begin its statement by expressing its profound regret over the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan. Mr. Annan deserves recognition and gratitude for the intelligence, determination and courage with which he has carried out his delicate and complex functions. His enormous effort has been frustrated by the non-cooperation of the parties to the conflict, primarily the Government of Syria. Yesterday, the Government of Chile issued an official communiqué regretting the decision of the Joint Special Envoy, expressing hope for the speedy appointment of his successor, and calling for compliance with the six-point plan submitted by Mr. Annan, which has been endorsed by the United Nations.

The delegation of Chile voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B. Today, the General Assembly has raised its voice to vehemently condemn the massive and systematic violations of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic. The use of force against civilians, arbitrary executions, forced disappearances, torture, murder, persecutions of human rights activists, journalists and protesters, and extreme violence, including sexual violence against women and children, are unacceptable violations of human rights.

The Assembly has reaffirmed its condemnation following 17 months of political crisis. During that time, the crisis has gone from brutally repressed peaceful protests to a situation of virtual civil war, as denounced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross. All parties to the conflict have the obligation to end the violence and the responsibility to respect civilians' rights to life and physical integrity. We regret the violence, the indiscriminate attacks and the use of heavy weapons, which have increased, resulting in many deaths, including those of women, children and vulnerable persons. Chile condemns violence from any source and demands an immediate cessation on the part of all parties. The resolution we have just adopted is precisely the appeal of the international community for the situation to end.

The delegation of Chile reiterates its support for the six-point plan, submitted by the Joint Special Envoy, and the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), of 30 June. Both documents recognize the need for an inclusive political process, led by the Syrian people and in conditions determined by them. In that context, the international community, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, has the duty to cooperate to ensure that the Syrian people can find their way to political dialogue, and ultimately achieve the stability and prosperity that its noble people deserve.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and various social media outlets report atrocities and crimes for which there must be no impunity. The rule of law must prevail, and whoever may be responsible for serious human rights violations, including those that may constitute crimes against humanity, should be brought to justice.

We feel a special concern for the population, which needs humanitarian assistance. Chile calls for the facilitation of the secure delivery of timely assistance to the victims of the crisis. My delegation acknowledges the humanitarian efforts of the neighbouring countries of Syria, which have welcomed thousands of refugees. We also acknowledge the work done by the International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, United Nations agencies and various non-governmental organizations in this vital matter.

Chile reiterates its support for the efforts of the Arab League to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria. We see special value in the contribution of regional organizations to conflict resolution.

Finally, as stated in the communiqué of the Government of Chile of 2 August,

> "Chile reaffirms its conviction that the Security Council must fulfil its key and urgent role in resolving the Syrian conflict under its mandate enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations".

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): Brazil voted in favor of resolution 66/253 B, just adopted, because we fully support the main message it conveys — the urgent need for a ceasefire, the cessation of violence in all its forms, and the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). Our decision also reflects our belief that the General Assembly could not remain silent as violence escalates in Syria and the ensuing human suffering increases.

The position we took today, which is coherent with Brazil's policy with regard to the Syrian crisis since its beginning, should also be seen as a message to all parties to renounce the use of force, since there is no military solution to the conflict. This is the only way to avoid a deeper descent into a spiral of destruction that, as witnessed elsewhere before, will further punish first and foremost the Syrian population.

The primary responsibility for ending violence, upholding the law — both domestic and international — and respecting human rights lies with the Government of Syria, as we have stated time and again. It must fully and immediately meet this grave and urgent responsibility. At the same time, we also insist that all parties fulfil their obligations to halt the violence and respect international humanitarian law, as well as actively engage in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict.

For its part, the international community has a key role to play in ensuring that the Annan plan and the road map envisaged by the Action Group for Syria

prevail. Our individual and collective support for those diplomatic efforts, in particular the end of violence and a consensual, Syrian-led political transition, must be resolute both in words and in deeds. In that regard, international stakeholders must refrain from any action that might deepen or prolong the conflict. That is in the interest not only of Syrians, but also of the international community as a whole. No legitimate purpose will be truly served by the further militarization of the conflict and increased destabilization of Syria.

Consistent with previous United Nations resolutions, the Annan plan and the communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), Brazil remains of the view that any political transition should be inclusive and led by the Syrians themselves. What we can and should do is to encourage the parties to find a mutually acceptable solution that responds to the aspirations of the Syrian people to peace, justice, democracy and economic progress. Brazil hopes that the core message from the Assembly today will effectively help the parties in Syria to meet that challenge.

Finally, allow me to express Brazil's deep regret at Mr. Annan's decision not to renew his mandate. We have extended all possible support to his work, which we consider of great value. The six-point plan should continue to guide international efforts to help Syrians overcome the current conflict. Just as important, Mr. Annan's exemplary efforts should further inspire us in our determination to help the parties in urgently finding a peaceful solution.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers here in the Hall at 3 o'clock.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations

A/66/PV.125

General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

125th plenary meeting
Friday, 3 August 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser. . . . . (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 34 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B on Syria because we believe that, in the present circumstances, it is a necessary response to the extreme seriousness of the situation being borne by that country.

Costa Rica believes that the inaction caused by the double veto in the Security Council, in addition to the enormous obstacles facing the joint United Nations and Arab League mediation, fully justifies the General Assembly seeking other forms of promoting a peaceful settlement to the humanitarian tragedy, insecurity and regional instability created by the conflict.

Costa Rica highly values consensus in our Organization. Nonetheless, the quest for consensus must neither paralyse the international community nor weaken the message of the United Nations in the face of unacceptable events such as those with which we are seized.

The main source of the Syrian tragedy is the intransigence of its present Government, its systematic use of violence against civilians, and its refusal to undertake in good faith the path of mediation proposed by the United Nations and the Arab League. Today, we regret the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan, but we understand that, in the present circumstances, his capacity to act and influence the situation had been exhausted.

In addition to the intolerable human cost, that alarming combination of factors threatens to cause the conflict to engulf the entire region and has led to a bloody civil war, which is always fertile ground for fanaticism, terrorism and chaos.

For all the foregoing reasons, we make a heartfelt appeal to the Syrian authorities to respect their commitments to international law, and in particular to international human rights and international humanitarian law. It is imperative that they take the measures necessary to avoid further bloodshed and violations of human rights in accordance with their responsibility to protect their own population. That imperative must be carried out above all by the Government, but it also involves the armed opposition and those who support it in armed clashes and any other relevant actors in the conflict.

Finally, we want to emphasize that the decision on how Syria organizes its Government and institutions belongs exclusively to the Syrian people through broad and inclusive political dialogue based on respect for diversity, tolerance, peace and democracy.

Mr. Pham (Viet Nam): Viet Nam has been closely following the situation in Syria and shares the deep concerns of the international community, including those of the countries of the region, over the lack of

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progress in the political process and the increasing instability and violence that have caused enormous losses to the Syrian people.

We strongly call upon all parties concerned in Syria to seriously implement the agreement brokered by the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, especially with respect to an immediate end to violence and for the promotion of dialogue and national reconciliation to arrive at a Syrian-led political solution to the current situation.

As a State party to international legal instruments on the prohibition and destruction of weapons of mass destruction, Viet Nam demands full compliance with the commitments made under those instruments. Viet Nam supports the position expressed by many countries upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including those of respect for political independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of States, which should be the primary basis for the actions of States and oppositions. Along those lines, Viet Nam does not support practices or implications that may create negative precedents that are not in keeping with that fundamental principle. We also reaffirm our strong support for all constructive efforts on the part of the international community aimed at putting an early end to the crisis and at the promotion of a Syrian-led political process in Syria, and call for action consistent with that goal on the part of all States and organizations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation deems regrettable the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 66/253 B, which only exacerbates the confrontational approach to resolving the Syrian crisis and in no way helps to bring the parties to a platform of dialogue, with a view to finding peaceful ways to resolve the crisis in a manner that would benefit the Syrian population as a whole.

The resolution's façade of humanitarian rhetoric attempts to mask its blatant support for the armed opposition, which well-known countries are actively supporting and financing and to which they are providing mercenaries and weapons. It is no coincidence that those countries were the most active sponsors of the resolution.

The resolution, in violating the Charter of the United Nations, intrudes on the jurisdiction of the Council, which continues to actively consider the question of Syria. The document contains statements referencing the inability of the Council to react effectively to the Syrian crisis, which is not the case. Suffice it to recall the unanimously adopted resolutions 2042 (2012), 2043 (2012) and 2059 (2012).

The Council achieves consensus when we take politically tested and balanced decisions; when members work hand in hand to implement them; and when they do not act outside of the Council or the agreed frameworks and mechanisms for a Syrian settlement process.

The resolution adopted today is harmful because it contravenes the efforts under way to help implement the Annan plan and the Geneva agreements of the Action Group. It undermines the chances of launching a Syrian process aimed at a political settlement. We also deem unacceptable attempts to alter the mandate of the Special Envoy. We deeply regret Mr. Annan's decision to resign. We hope that Mr. Annan — a very experienced diplomat and politician — will be replaced by a worthy successor, and that up until 31 August he will work to successfully implement the Council's mandate.

At this stage, what is important is to prevent any slackening of international efforts to resolve the crisis in Syria. The Annan plan, like the Geneva agreements, remain significant as a guideline for the peaceful settlement of Syria's problems. The members of the Action Group should, in a spirit of responsibility, require the strict implementation by all parties of the provisions of those documents and send a clear signal that the violence must end.

In that regard, we welcome the statement by the Secretary-General that the Organization remains dedicated to achieving a diplomatic resolution of the crisis in Syria. In this situation, it is particularly important to maintain a United Nations presence in the country. In spite of all the difficulties faced by the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, it remains the only independent source of objective information on the situation in the country and is an important instrument to help implement the Annan plan and the Geneva communiqué.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Winston Churchill once said, "The truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is". The Al-Assad regime could use a healthy dose of Churchill's wisdom today. No matter what Al-Assad says, he cannot alter the horrific truth about the brutality

that he and his morally bankrupt regime have unleashed and are unleashing on the Syrian people.

In the month since we gathered here to speak about Syria, the Al-Assad regime has slaughtered thousands more innocents, indiscriminately murdering civilians — including women and children — using the firepower of its artillery, its armour and even, in some cases, its air force.

The General Assembly is no stranger to distortions and absurdities. But over the course of several debates, the Syrian representative has managed to take the art of fabrication in this Hall to new heights. If lying were an Olympic event, I have no doubt that the Syrian regime and its representatives could easily win a gold medal. Of course, it is nothing new for Al-Assad — and his representatives — to blame all of their country's ills on Israel. But this time around they have broadened their horizons to a whole range of other nations.

Behind every rock and building in Syria, Al-Assad sees not only Israelis, British and French — but also Saudis, Qataris, Kuwaitis and Turks. He says that the slaughter in Syria is a western and Arab conspiracy, and has nothing to do with him personally.

It is clear that the men, women and children of Syria are not the indiscriminate victims of a natural disaster. Nor are they the accidental casualties of a war. The civilians of Syria are the deliberate targets of a brutal regime and its evil allies, who will commit any crime to keep Bashar Al-Assad in power.

On the ground, Iranians are assisting Al-Assad's henchmen. They have been deployed on Syrian soil to help sustain the Syrian regime and take part in its killing spree against the Syrian people.

The outside forces that have been instrumental in the slaughter in Syria speak in a Persian accent. Unfortunately, many in the international community do not yet acknowledge that fact, despite the overwhelming evidence that supports it. Yes, while the Security Council remains paralysed in New York, Al-Assad's council of terror continues to operate ruthlessly in Damascus.

On Al-Assad's advisory board sit Ahmadinejad and Nasrallah, who offer him guidance on how to butcher the Syrian people more effectively. Al-Assad's partners in that trio of terror are not shy about discussing their role in the slaughter. Last week, Nasrallah gave a speech praising the Al-Assad regime, calling it "a real military partner". And just several days ago, Iran's Vice-President promised the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs that Iran would continue to offer its "experience and capabilities" to Al-Assad's killing machine.

The experience and capabilities of Iran and Hizbullah in repression are on full display in Syria. They provide weapons, ammunition, training, intelligence and logistical equipment to Al-Assad. It is time for the international community to hold all of those three members of that trio of terror accountable for their crimes. The trio poses the most immediate threat to international peace and security.

The world can begin by calling Hizbullah exactly what it is: a group of global terrorists.

For those in this Hall who are still looking for more evidence that Hizbullah is a terrorist organization, I ask: What are they waiting for? The group has only been actively conducting terrorist acts for three decades. They murdered 241 American servicemen and 58 French servicemen in 1983, blowing up their barracks in Beirut. They bombed the AMIA Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires in 1994, killing 85 people. And last month, a Hizbullah suicide bomber murdered six Israeli tourists on a bus in Bulgaria.

What else does Hizbullah need to do for the world to understand that it is a terrorist organization? Today Hizbullah's terrorist network extends from the cities of West Africa to the communities of South America to the villages of Lebanon and Syria. How many more innocents must fall victim to its terrorism before the world acts?

For years, Al-Assad repeatedly denied that he held chemical weapons. Surprise, surprise. Last week we heard a new revelation from Syrian officials: Al-Assad does have chemical weapons, and his Government is prepared to use them.

The world should wake up to this dangerous reality today, not tomorrow. We should not pretend that a regime that cuts the throats of children today will not be prepared to gas them tomorrow. Al-Assad must know that he will be held accountable for using those weapons. He must understand that transferring chemical weapons to Hizbullah or other terrorist organizations is a red line that he cannot cross. The world's most dangerous ophthalmologist should not be allowed to claim that he is colour-blind. When it comes

to chemical weapons, this red line should be very, very clear.

The lies of Al-Assad are an affront to the thousands of Syrian civilians who have been murdered. Unlike the members of Al-Assad's diplomatic service, these people have no opportunity to apply for political asylum. Instead, the women and children of Syria are shot trying to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

Yet his lies cannot hide one simple truth. Bashar Al-Assad has no moral authority to govern, he has no legitimacy to rule, and he never did. It is time for everyone in the Organization to speak clearly, decisively and truthfully about the reality on the ground in Syria. It does not make a difference where one comes from, what politics one preaches, or what faith one belongs to; no decent human being can stay silent in the face of what is happening in Syria.

Today, on behalf of the Israeli people and the Jewish people, I want to speak directly to the Syrian people. I know that our two nations have a long history of conflict and are still separated by politics. Yet Israel's hand remains extended to the people of Syria. We continue to offer humanitarian aid, food and medicine to them. I want to use this platform today to again express Israel's hope for a brighter future for the Syrian people, along with all the other peoples of the Middle East — a future of freedom, prosperity and tolerance; a future of liberty and justice; and a future of peace.

Mr. Seruhere (United Republic of Tanzania): I am taking the floor to explain the position that the United Republic of Tanzania took in the voting on resolution 66/253 B, adopted this morning.

At the outset, the United Republic of Tanzania expresses its sympathy to the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian people for the deaths of innocent people, particularly women, children and the elderly, who have always been victims of conflicts and wars around the globe. The United Republic of Tanzania fully recognizes the magnitude of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and appreciates the national, regional and international efforts that have been made to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, including the efforts of this body through the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Kofi Annan.

We abstained in the voting, however, because of our strong belief that the crisis has been misdiagnosed in terms of the Charter of the United Nations. Our vote should by no means be construed as an acceptance of the impunity and massive violations, including human rights violations, perpetrated by whomsoever on innocent civilians in Syria.

The United Republic of Tanzania adheres to the principles and the practice of non-discrimination, unity and development. We are deeply concerned that the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, concerning sovereignty and non-interference in matters that are within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, have not been fully upheld in the Syrian crisis.

It is regrettable that the resolution on the Syrian Arab Republic refrains from recognizing the external forces that have also contributed to the escalation and perpetration of the chaos in Syria. In our opinion, that omission has been and remains a major obstacle to achieving a meaningful and peaceful solution to the crisis.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the United Republic of Tanzania will continue to abide by the fundamental principle of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, namely, that of condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of Governments.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We note that, although it has undergone several amendments, the substance of resolution 66/253 B, just adopted, remains unchanged.

China is deeply worried by the increasingly grave situation in Syria and the continued escalation of the crisis. China opposes and condemns all forms of terrorism and violent acts against innocent civilians. We urge all parties in Syria to immediately and completely cease violence and create the conditions for a political settlement to the crisis.

Both the Syrian Government and the opposition have the obligation to restore peace and stability in Syria at an early date. What has happened proves that putting pressure on only one party will not help to resolve the Syrian issue. On the contrary, it will derail the political settlement of the crisis, cause a further escalation of turmoil, and let the crisis spill over into other countries in the region, thereby jeopardizing regional peace and stability. The only viable approach to Syrian issues to seek a just, peaceful and appropriate solution through political means. A military approach will result in a larger conflict and more bloodshed.

China regrets Mr. Kofi Annan's resignation from the post of Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations

and the League of Arab States. We have undertaken concrete measures to render active support and coordination to Mr. Annan's mediation efforts. We understand the difficulty and obstacles Mr. Annan's mediation has faced. We express appreciation for the positive and constructive role Mr. Annan has played in promoting a political settlement to the Syrian issue. In the current circumstances, the international community should continue to support the implementation of the communiqué adopted by the Action Group on Syria (S/2012/523, annex) in Geneva, the relevant Security Council resolutions and Mr. Annan's six-point plan.

Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity should be respected. Syria's future and destiny should be determined by the Syrian people themselves. A political settlement to the Syrian issue can be led only by the Syrian people and should be accepted by all relevant parties in Syria. To impose a solution from outside will not help diffuse the Syrian crisis. China opposes any measures aimed at forcing regime change. Sanctions will only complicate the situation further. The Security Council has been considering the situation in Syria and its authority should be upheld.

On the Syrian issue, China has no self-interest, but rather a consistent and responsible attitude. Our fundamental point of departure is safeguarding the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the basic norms that govern international relations, including the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States; safeguarding the interests of the Syrian people and the Arab States; and safeguarding the interests of all countries, in particular small and medium-sized ones. This is China's consistent stance in all international affairs. It is not targeted at a particular issue or time.

China understands the concerns of Arab countries and the League of Arab States with regard to an early settlement of the Syrian issue. We set store by the important role they have played in seeking a political settlement to this issue and appreciate their efforts in this regard. China stands ready to make concerted efforts with the international community, including the Arab States, to uphold the general direction of seeking a political settlement to this issue and encouraging political dialogue to resolve differences and ease tensions so as to safeguard the fundamental interests of the people of Syria and other countries of the region and to preserve peace and stability in the Middle East.

China's vote on the draft resolution was cast in accordance with the position I have outlined.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): While my country, Syria, regrets today's adoption of the blatantly biased and unbalanced resolution 66/253 B for the reasons I outlined in my statement during this morning's plenary meeting (see A/66/PV.124), we nonetheless thank all the countries that voted against it and assumed the responsible position of upholding the principles of the United Nations and the provisions of the Charter and rejecting policies that promote intervention and chaos in international relations, particularly since such chaos has been intentionally incited.

Syria's Government and people expect the United Nations and its Member States to help Syria in confronting a culture of extremism and terrorism, whether it originates in Israel or is anchored in an ideology based on Al-Qaida's fundamentalist principles. We expect to see the promotion of national dialogue as a path to the peaceful resolution of the crisis under the six-point plan, and to see pressure brought to bear on parties to end their embrace of violence and terrorism.

For its part, the Government of Syria has committed to ending the violence and has been withdrawing heavy weapons from cities since 12 April in order to demonstrate its commitment to the first item of the Kofi Annan plan. But the armed groups have not fulfilled their commitments in those areas; on the contrary, they have exploited the Government's commitment so as to fill the security vacuum created by the cessation of violence on the part of Government forces. They have tried to gain control of populated neighbourhoods by force of arms and by using civilians as human shields. Their troops have intensified their attacks on civilians, military personnel and State institutions, supported by various parties associated both with Governments and with other groups in our region and beyond.

The States that have called for successive meetings of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council are in fact seeking to provide political cover for the actions of the armed terrorist groups operating in Syria and to conceal the crimes they are committing against the Syrian people, such as assaulting civilians and public and private property, killing official personnel, abducting citizens for ransom, bombing power stations and oil and gas pipelines, stealing crops, attacking police stations and burning hospitals and clinics.

Some are relentlessly seeking to destroy the dignity of some segments of the Syrian people by encouraging them to leave the country and turning them into refugees imprisoned in camps that can at best be described as detention centres, where their anguish and the dilemma they find themselves in are exploited through cheap bargaining and political blackmail in the name of false slogans, which, I might add, are based on promises on which they have not yet delivered. Not to mention the fact that some of these camps have been turned into military centres where terrorists are gathering in order to prepare for eventual dispatch to Syria in order to commit horrendous crimes, as has happened in the past and continues to occur at this very moment in the city of Aleppo.

The establishment of a national reconciliation ministry within the Syrian cabinet is testament to the Syrian Government's genuine desire to ensure the success of an inclusive national dialogue among all segments of the Syrian people, aimed at achieving a peaceful solution to the current crisis, precisely as set out in the six-point plan. What is strange here is that the European Union has imposed sanctions on the Minister of National Reconciliation himself, only a few days after he took his portfolio, despite the fact that the man responsible for that important ministry is a member of the Syrian opposition. Thus, foreign intervention in Syrian affairs has pushed the Syrian people's legitimate demands for reform to third or fourth place in terms of priorities and has converted them into armed rebellion against the Syrian State directed from outside Syria, including, unfortunately, from some Arab countries.

My colleague the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia has painted a totally erroneous picture of what is happening in my country. I am not going to address all of those mistakes, but will confine myself to responding to the remarks he made about our Palestinian brother refugees in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. First, I should say that this refugee camp houses Palestinian refugees expelled from their homeland by the Israeli occupying authorities between 1948 and 1967. However, the camp now also hosts twice as many Syrians as Palestinians, and is therefore not exclusively for Palestinians. Secondly, representatives of Palestinian organizations in the camp issued an official statement indicating that those who fired on the camp were members of armed terrorist gangs seeking to thrust the Palestinian refugees living in Syria into the armed rebellion against the Syrian State. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the sponsors of those armed terrorist groups, are conspiring against the safety, well-being and stability of our brother Palestinian refugees living in Syria.

The Saudi-Qatari resolution adopted today, as we have said, is in fact serving Israeli interests by targeting Palestinian refugees inside and outside Palestine. What does my Saudi colleague say about the brutal actions of the Saudi army against Saudi citizens peacefully demanding reform in the Al-Qatif and Al-Awamiya areas of Saudi Arabia? Can he explain to the Assembly what the Saudi armed forces are doing in Bahrain? My colleague the Saudi representative said that he was introducing the resolution on behalf of the Group of Arab States. That is not true; as the Assembly is aware, two Arab States did not support it, and it is therefore false and totally unfounded to claim that it was introduced on behalf of the Arab Group.

It is very odd that my colleague, the representative of Saudi Arabia, would put words into the mouth of Mr. Kofi Annan and strangely interpret his demands so as not to extend his mission. In that regard, we express our regret over the fact that Mr. Annan has submitted his resignation. Allow me to reiterate that Syria has consistently declared and proved its full commitment to implementing the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy and has cooperated with the observer mission in order to achieve the desired goals of that plan.

Israeli State terrorism has caused the culture of terrorism to spread across the globe. As the Israeli representative said, it is perhaps appropriate that an Olympic Games should be organized, but solely for terrorism. Then Israel would be awarded the top prize and first place and, in honour of that win, there would be an anthem to the shedding of blood of innocent civilians in celebration of that terrorism. The disgrace of Israel in violating the provisions of the Charter is difficult to assess here, and those in Palestine and beyond are well documented in the archives of the United Nations: assassinating peace activists who are citizens of countries that sponsored the resolution; hijacking civilian planes; and killing scores of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian citizens in the Golan.

The ultimate hypocrisy and misinformation were reflected in the remarks of the Israeli representative when he spoke of the threat of chemical weapons. He ignored the fact that Israel itself has not acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and refuses to implement the 1995 resolution on the Middle East with regard to reviewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Resolution 50/66 called for

the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. Consequently, Israel is not a member of the NPT. Therefore, Israel and its representative should instead remain silent since merely to raise this issue shames them.

Israel has 300 nuclear weapons in its arsenal. Germany has added six submarines that have give Israel the capability of firing those nuclear missiles. Incidentally, Germany is a sponsor of the resolution. That obliges me to conclude that there is a Western, Israeli and partially Arab alliance here. Let the Israeli representative keep his offer of assistance, which is misleading, to himself. The Syrian people do not need that poison. They are impatiently awaiting the liberation of the Syrian Golan from the yoke of the Israeli occupation, which is supported by many Member States that sponsored the resolution.

Allow me to remind the Israeli representative that international law is on our side and not on that of Israel's policies, irrespective of their thrust and aims. They are policies of aggression and occupation that have occupied some 50 per cent of the agenda of this General Assembly since the establishment of the world Organization. The irresponsible Israeli policies to which I have referred will eventually lead to the further escalation of violence and terrorism in our region and the entire world. It is not possible for the so-called international community to fight terrorism in one area, while encouraging Israeli State-sponsored terrorism in other areas.

For all these reasons, allow me to say that the resolution, which was sponsored by the West, Saudi Arabia and Qatar against my country, serves only the interests of Israel and its aggression.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B, as it is our understanding that this decision of the General Assembly establishes crucial elements in helping to put an end to the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Syrian people and in adopting the necessary measures to facilitate a peaceful solution in line with international law.

The resolution clearly expresses the feelings of the majority of the international community concerning the very grave events taking place in Syria. While it certainly regrets the resignation of Special Envoy Kofi Annan, the Government of Uruguay also reiterates its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his High Representatives, and for the work of regional organizations pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, in order to achieve the aforementioned goals.

In that regard, I would like to underscore our belief that, in seeking a peaceful solution, it is of the utmost importance to keep the protection of the rights of the civilian population as our primary objective. We believe that all actions undertaken by the various actors involved must be in the strictest and fullest respect for the principles and standards of international law in the Syrian people's sovereign pursuit of a peaceful solution.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine delegation wishes to express its grave concern over the situation being experienced by the Syrian Arab Republic. We regret that, once again, the structure of the Security Council, which includes permanent members that enjoy the right of veto, has resulted in inaction by the international community in a crisis in which we all agree on the need to stop the violence and to respect the human rights of those affected by it.

The General Assembly has a responsibility entrusted to it under the Charter, but it is also up to Member States by virtue of our commitment to respect and to implement the purposes and principles upon which we have built this Organization. For most countries of the world, the United Nations is a necessary and unique authority in defence of the norms and principles that must govern the conduct of members of the international community. Therefore, any stand taken by the General Assembly must seek a peaceful and lasting solution to the situation in Syria, while respecting the internal affairs of that country and protecting the human rights of its inhabitants.

For those reasons, the Argentine delegation voted in favour of the resolution in order, first, to endorse action by the General Assembly to put an end to the violence in Syria as soon as possible; secondly, to promote and to defend full respect for human rights in Syria; and thirdly, to support the calls by the international community for all parties to respect the recommendations made by various forums and bodies of this Organization so as to meet those goals, including the implementation of the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to Syria.

My delegation also wishes to state that our affirmative vote is on the understanding that the call to put an end to the violence is addressed to all parties,

not only the Syrian Government. My country hopes that all States refrain from undertaking actions that fuel the violence in Syria. Argentina recognizes and values the efforts of the League of Arab States to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis, but we do not wholeheartedly endorse all its decisions, resolutions and measures.

Finally, my delegation believes that nothing in the current resolution opens the way for the use of armed force by any members of the international community, in particular with regard to the possible interpretation of the references to the protection of the civilian population in Syria contained in the fourteenth preambular paragraph 14 and to the Security Council considering appropriate measures in paragraph 9.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): Nigeria deeply regrets that the situation in Syria continues to deteriorate rapidly and the fact that the concerned parties, as well as the international community, have so far failed to bring about an end to the conflict. We also received with profound concern the announcement of the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, as mediator in the Syrian conflict.

That brings into sharp focus the protracted nature of the conflict and the diverse challenges therein. Mr. Annan's resignation is a major setback for the United Nations initiative in Syria. Indeed, it portends the worsening of an already dire situation in that country. The lack of support for his six-point plan is indicative of the ineffectiveness of the United Nations, in particular, and the international community, in general, to deal decisively and transparently with the situation in Syria. Clearly, therefore, the United Nations and the larger international community have the responsibility, and indeed the moral obligation, to act appropriately to stem the deterioration of the situation in the country and to help the Syrian people to realize their challenged desire for peace.

In that connection, we believe that resolution 66/253 B, which was adopted earlier today, imperfect as it is, provides the much-needed and currently lacking impetus for action by the General Assembly towards the resolution of the crisis. The imperfections of the resolution to which we alluded are, indeed, matters of concern. We have misgivings about some issues, among which is the lack of balance in the text. It is heavily tilted against one party to the conflict and mentions by name only the Syrian authorities. It also holds only one side accountable for the atrocities and human rights violations committed in the conflict.

Additionally, our support for the resolution does not imply a blanket endorsement of the decision of the Arab League of 22 July, reached at Doha, which, inter alia, implicitly calls for regime change and the imposition of sanctions on the Syrian Government, as those are matters beyond the remit of the General Assembly but squarely within the purview of the Security Council. We also do not believe that the call to welcome the Syrian opposition conference, held under the auspices of the Arab League and encouraging greater cohesion of the opposition, is the responsibility of the General Assembly. Indeed, that would undermine the authority and impartiality of this Assembly.

In spite of all those shortcomings, Nigeria voted in favour of the resolution on grounds of certain fundamental principles and beliefs that underpin our foreign policy and national outlook. Nigeria has consistently and openly advocated respect for women, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and accountability in all States. We have stood for the protection of civilians in conflict situations. We have a long-standing commitment to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of disputes, as demonstrated by our peacekeeping antecedents.

Nigeria also believes in the importance of regional initiatives in resolving disputes. As such, it supported the Arab League initiative on Syria especially aimed at bringing to an end to the grave humanitarian crisis in the country (see resolution 66/176). That is consistent with our stance on similar situations in our own part of the world.

In voting for the resolution, Nigeria was moved by the concern for the escalating violence, the degenerating human rights and humanitarian situation and the deplorable loss of life in Syria. Beyond the adoption of the resolution in the General Assembly today, Nigeria calls on the Security Council to live up to its Charter obligations towards the maintenance of international peace and security and to address constructively and transparently and, more important, in an even-handed manner the grave and rapidly deteriorating situation in Syria.

The bloodshed must be stopped now. The possible disintegration of that country must be avoided. We expect the Security Council to take action quickly and

the General Assembly to facilitate the move towards dialogue, reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of the present crisis in Syria.

Ultimately, only the Syrian people, in the exercise of their sovereign right, can decide their future and chart a course for the continued well-being of their country. Nigeria therefore supports a peaceful Syrian-led resolution of the conflict without undue external interference. The resolution provides an opportunity to stem the tide of conflict and human suffering in Syria. We believe that its full implementation by all parties to the conflict has great potential for bringing peace and an end to the conflict in Syria.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): Serbia voted in favour of the text of resolution 66/253 B with the understanding that all international efforts should aim solely for an urgent end to the violence. Serbia fully supports the principle of the peaceful settlement of all disputes, and underscores the need for a comprehensive political dialogue among all sides involved in the conflict with the aim of achieving a sustainable political solution that would contribute to the stability of the region.

Mr. Alcántara Mejía (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B on the situation in Syria, and we wish to state why we did so.

It is a resolution with a controversial text. That became clear in the meetings of the past few days at which it was presented, as well as today before it was put to a vote in the General Assembly. It could not be otherwise because the resolution addresses the situation of armed conflict, virtually a civil war, in the Syrian Arab Republic. Every conflict is a combat, a struggle, a disagreement, a controversy. The resolution deplores the fact that the Security Council has not been able to ensure that its decisions are fulfilled by the Syrian authorities.

But resolution 66/253 B will not produce an immediate change in the situation. It is a not a perfect resolution; it neither could be nor needs to be. For the purposes of the General Assembly, it is the resolution that was possible and that could attract the critical mass of votes needed to be adopted. It is precisely for the virtue of having galvanized us to come to an agreement that the delegation of the Dominican Republic voted in favour of the resolution.

The resolution represents the difference between keeping one's arms crossed or being paralysed by an inability to reconcile our current political interests and actually doing something. It shows that the Organization is neither silent nor indifferent to the suffering and aspirations of the Syrian people. That is why the delegation of the Dominican Republic decided to support it. We decided to support it because the situation on the ground has worsened. It is fraught with alarming, massively tragic events that appear to be irreversible steps towards a conflict that is even more bitter, widespread, internationalized and destructive.

For that reason, we continue to hope that differences of view among the permanent members of the Security Council can soon be overcome so that the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the situation in Syria can be implemented. If that course of action is delayed further, we will confront the inevitable reality that violence, that age-old midwife of history, will impose its own bloody, unstoppable solution. It will do so in spite of all the expertise, all the efforts and all the good intentions of the Organization.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): Since the 99th meeting of the General Assembly — the last meeting before today in which we discussed the agenda item before us — the situation in Syria has steadily deteriorated. Neither side has fulfilled its obligations under the six-point plan of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, which was endorsed by the Security Council in its resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). The conflict has become increasingly militarized, and a number of terrorist acts have been committed against State institutions and public infrastructure. There have been gross violations of human rights by all sides. The humanitarian situation has also become dire, and more than 2 million civilians are said to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, the Syrian parties, instead of seriously commencing a Syrian-led political process, have pursued a military approach in order to realize their objectives.

We strongly condemn all violence and violations of human rights irrespective of who their perpetrators are. We also condemn in the strongest terms possible the terrorist acts that have been and continue to be committed in Syria. We call upon all parties to dissociate themselves from terrorist groups and ensure that no space is provided for those groups.

In the prevailing circumstances in Syria, there is an urgent need for the international community to close ranks and send a united message to the Syrian parties to walk back their military approach and resolve the crisis through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process. There is no other way to bring about a sustained cessation of violence in all its forms by all parties. It is also the only way to end human rights violations and create an atmosphere for the safe and unhindered delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance.

We have consistently called for international efforts to assist the Syrian parties to resolve the crisis and bring about peace through dialogue and political processes. Accordingly, we have strongly supported the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan. Even though Mr. Annan has resigned, it is important to note that his efforts have put in place a set of valuable documents that, if implemented, can facilitate a political resolution of the Syrian crisis without any further bloodshed.

In order to help the Syrian parties to change their course and address the crisis through political dialogue, it is important that all parties, inside and outside Syria, fully abide by their obligations under resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). The parties must be prevailed upon to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the final communiqué issued in Geneva on 30 June (S/2012/523, annex), which have been accepted by the Government of Syria.

India firmly believes that it is critical for the United Nations to remain strongly involved with the Syrian parties and other actors in the search for a way forward. Unilateral action of any kind will not resolve the crisis; it will only exacerbate the problem and caused greater instability and violence. We also believe that the appropriate path for the leadership of Syria is for Syrians to decide through a democratic process. The task of the international community anchored in the United Nation is to assist the Syrian parties in that process.

The resolution that the General Assembly has adopted today (resolution 66/253 B) makes specific reference to the decision of the League of Arab States of 22 July. Although we do not hold any brief for any particular Syrian leader, we cannot welcome the League of Arab States resolution of 22 July, which openly calls for President Al-Assad to step down from power and for States Members of the United Nations to sever diplomatic relations and contacts with Syria. It is unfortunate that that element was not removed from the text of resolution 66/253 B. We therefore abstained in the voting on the resolution adopted today.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): Guyana abstained in the voting on resolution 66/253 B on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. In explanation of vote, I have the honour to make the following statement.

A tragedy is unfolding in Syria that should have been avoided. Innocent civilians are paying an increasingly heavy price for a spiraling conflict involving multiple actors and interests. Guyana is gravely concerned at the escalation of violence and condemns unequivocally all violations of human rights, by whomsoever committed. We deplore the tragic loss of life and the increasing number of fatalities recorded, especially among the civilian population. We are equally concerned about the humanitarian impact on the affected population. All perpetrators should be held to account.

The primary responsibility falls to the Syrian authorities to take steps for the cessation of violence and to ensure an end to human rights violations and attacks against civilians, to protect its population and to fully comply with its obligations under applicable international law.

But in the current context of the increasing militarization of the situation, the international community cannot turn a blind eye to the actions of armed opposition groups or to terrorist elements. The evident complexity of the situation demands a united and comprehensive response by the international community addressing all sides: the Government and the opposition, including armed opponents.

Guyana is concerned that the resolution just adopted falls short in that regard and raises the prospect of undue partiality to an amorphous and unknown opposition and of encroaching on the sovereign right and prerogative of the Syrian people to determine their leadership.

In the interest of the Syrian people, the United Nations must continue to make unceasing efforts to end the bloodshed on all sides and assist in the quest for a viable political solution. In that context, the six-point plan of the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy remains valid and should be advanced in all its aspects. We support the continued efforts of the Secretary-General towards that end.

Given the gravity of the situation, Guyana believes that it is imperative that the Security Council urgently fulfil its responsibility under the Charter to meet this threat to international peace and security and avert any further deterioration of conditions on the ground. The international community must urgently unite in responding to the plight of the Syrian people.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I shall now give the floor to those representatives wishing to make statements following the adoption of the resolution.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Albania; the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We strongly support resolution A/66/253 B regarding the situation in Syria introduced by the Group of Arab States and welcome its adoption by the General Assembly earlier today.

The European Union stands by the Syrian people at this critical juncture in their peaceful and courageous struggle for freedom, dignity, democracy and human rights. It strongly condemns the ever-increasing use of force by the regime, including the use of heavy artillery and shelling from tanks, aircraft and combat helicopters, against populated areas, in blatant violation of its obligations under the Annan plan and Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). We urge the Syrian regime to put an immediate end to the killing of civilians, cease the use of heavy weapons and withdraw those weapons and the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities in order to allow for a peaceful transition. International humanitarian law must be respected by all. We are deeply concerned about the recent intensification of violence, including in Damascus and Aleppo. The only way out of this violence is through a political transition that would meet the democratic and participatory aspirations of the Syrian people and bring stability back to Syria. The European Union remains committed to the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

The European Union recalls its full support for the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy's mission and his six-point plan, which must be implemented immediately and visibly. The EU commends the efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan, who announced his resignation as the Joint Special Envoy to Syria. The European Union has provided its full backing to the work of Mr. Annan throughout his mandate and to his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

We continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. This resignation stresses the urgency of the full, verifiable and immediate implementation of the six-point plan so as to allow for a political transition. The European Union underlines that those whose presence would undermine the transition should be excluded and that President Al-Assad, in this regard, has no place in the future of Syria.

The EU calls for united action by all members of the Security Council to exert more robust and effective pressure and ensure that there will be serious consequences for continued non-compliance with its previous decisions.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation and breaches of international humanitarian law in Syria. The systematic and widespread human rights violations committed by the regime demonstrate its outright contempt for human rights. We are also concerned about recent reports of the alleged use of cluster munitions against civilians. We reaffirm our support for the independent international commission of inquiry on Syria and its investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law, with a view to holding to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity. The EU recalls that all those responsible for widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations must be held accountable.

Recalling that the main responsibility for the current crisis lies with the Syrian authorities, the EU warns against any further militarization of the conflict and sectarian violence, which could only bring further suffering to Syria and risk having a tragic impact on the region. In that regard, the EU expresses

concern about the protection of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups and religious communities. We are also concerned about the influx of weapons into Syria. We therefore call on all States to refrain from delivering arms to the country.

The EU is seriously concerned about the potential use of chemical weapons in Syria. We call upon Syria to strictly abide by its obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The EU attaches the greatest importance to the safe and secure storage of such weapons of mass destruction. It expresses its hope that a future Syria will accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, thus joining the aspirations of the international community to ban and universally and completely eradicate this category of weapons of mass destruction.

The EU continues to urge all opposition groups to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria. In that regard, we welcome the efforts made by the opposition groups in recent meetings to elaborate on a common vision for the political transition of Syria in the post-Al-Assad era. All Syrians must have a place in the new Syria and enjoy equal rights, regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. It calls on the Syrian regime to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of neighbouring countries.

We call on all parties to allow full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian workers; to respect international humanitarian law, including the respect and protection of civilians; and, as a first step, to facilitate the implementation of humanitarian pauses to allow for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The EU stands ready to offer additional support, including financial support, to help neighbouring countries including Lebanon and Jordan, to host the increasing number of Syrian refugees fleeing the violence in Syria. The European Union will increase its humanitarian assistance to the Syrians, including internally displaced persons and refugees, and calls upon all countries to do likewise, in a transparent and coordinated manner, with particular attention paid to United Nations coordinated humanitarian response plans.

On 23 July, the European Union approved the designation of new persons and entities to be subject to restrictive measures, in particular members of the army and the intelligence and security services directly involved in the repression of the civilian population. We also agreed on measures to strengthen the enforcement of the EU's arms embargo. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. We will also continue to urge the international community to join our efforts by taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters.

The European Union reiterates that as soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, it is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria in all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilizing assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and a political transition.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): In early June, the Secretary-General told the General Assembly that Syria was at a critical moment, and called on us to act with unity and a collective will. Yet here we are, two months later — the violence escalates, the death toll continues to rise, and many parts of Syria lie in ruins. The Syrian Government has failed to honour the commitments it agreed to under the six-point plan, leaving its sponsor, Kofi Annan, frustrated and ultimately resigning, citing, among other things, the lack of clear unity in the Security Council. We join China, Costa Rica and others that have expressed regret at his resignation.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out more recently, Syrian Government officials have repeatedly said they would honour their commitments under that plan, but we are still waiting for them to act. Indeed, New Zealand waits for all sides to act. But it is unquestionably the Syrian Government that grows seemingly more scornful of international efforts to resolve this crisis, with its continued use of heavy weapons, and now the aerial bombardment of Aleppo. Those Government forces have an overwhelming advantage of military hardware and firepower that, while non-Government forces have now acquired some such weaponry by supply, capture or defection, still explains any perceived asymmetry in this situation.

The Security Council has been blocked from acting with firm resolve, and Member States seeking a rapid and purposeful end to this crisis are left wondering what else can be done. I hope that we will not have to

convene again in another two months only to be told that, for ordinary Syrians, the situation has deteriorated even further while the world stands by, unable to act. To use the Secretary-General's words from this morning, we must not fail that test. Against that awful background, we applaud regional efforts to resolve the crisis, notably today's initiative by some Arab States.

This crisis is sorely testing our collective ability to work for peace. In the absence of action under Chapter VII of the Charter, and in the light of a deadlocked Security Council — to which you, Mr. President, have rightly drawn attention — the General Assembly has, as you said, a role to play. Resolution 66/253 B is the next best option, building as it does on the loud and now constant demands of the international community for an end to the violence in Syria.

We are appalled at the Syrian Government's threatened use of chemical weapons. It is essential that the international community present a strong and united resolve against the use of such weapons. Indeed, we remind all parties, Government and opposition, of all of their obligations under international humanitarian law regarding the protection of civilians in non-international armed conflict. We do not turn a blind eye to humanitarian crimes, by whomsoever they are committed. We say quite clearly that those responsible for crimes against humanity, whichever side they may be on, cannot be part of Syria's future. New Zealand remains committed to the fight against impunity for such violations, and we call on all sides to cooperate with the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

As the violence escalates, so too does the humanitarian crisis. As we here seek a political solution, we must always be mindful of the suffering of internally displaced persons and refugees and of the enormous burden their plight imposes on surrounding countries, to which we, the United Nations, owe a debt of gratitude.

This is a deeply unsettling time for the whole of the Middle East. We all understand the historic importance and cultural depth of Syria, but all of us, not least those whose veto has deadlocked the Security Council, should pay heed to the Secretary-General's warning that a sectarian civil war in Syria would gravely imperil Syria's neighbours — and all that because one man, and the clique that surrounds him, have lost all touch with reality, have lost all legitimacy, and do not know when enough is enough.

Mr. Husain (Canada): Canada deplores the ongoing situation in Syria, which has claimed too many lives and threatens to inflame sectarian strife. Deteriorating conditions have increased tensions in Lebanon, and a massive outflow of refugees to Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon has created a humanitarian challenge for those countries and the international community.

Canada is disappointed by the Security Council's inability to take unified action to bring an end to the bloodshed in Syria. The international community cannot stand by in the face of such horrific violence. Canada therefore fully supports resolution 66/253 B, sponsored by the Group of Arab States, and is pleased by its prompt adoption today. Canada also fully supports calls for sanctions under Chapter VII, designed to persuade the Syrian authorities to engage sincerely in the search for a peaceful, negotiated solution. Canada calls on those that have sheltered the regime from international sanctions to cease their efforts immediately, join international efforts to pressure the Al-Assad regime to end the violence and use their influence with Syria to bring about a peaceful political transition.

We also learned yesterday of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's resignation. Canada is grateful for Mr. Annan's tireless efforts to end the bloodshed in Syria and achieve an inclusive, Syrian-led political transition. Sadly, with his departure, Mr. Annan's six-point plan is, in practical terms, dead. We continue to call on all parties to end the violence and respect the basic rights of all Syrians.

Mr. Berger (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks (see A/66/PV.124). It is with great regret that we have learned of the Joint Special Envoy's resignation. We are grateful to him for the excellent work he has done to find a diplomatic solution to this conflict. His decision comes at a critical juncture. We understand and share the frustration that the six-point plan conceived by him and endorsed by the Security Council has not been implemented due to the intransigence of the Syrian Government, which has consistently failed to implement its obligations under Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012).

We would also like to thank the Chair of the Group of Arab States, the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, for introducing today's resolution 66/253 B, which we fully endorse. It comes at a moment when the Security Council,

due to three double vetoes, has not been able to live up to its responsibility and agree on measures to ensure compliance with its own decisions. The resolution, which received the membership's overwhelming support, sends two clear messages: a message of support to the Syrian people in their suffering and struggle and in their hopes for a free and peaceful future; and a message to the Syrian regime that the international community does not and will not accept the war that Al-Assad is waging on his population. We condemn the regime's threat to use chemical weapons in breach of international law and morality. We earnestly call on all relevant forces in Syria to secure those weapons and to absolutely refrain from their use or transfer to others.

Germany is deeply worried about the reports of ongoing severe human rights violations in Syria, especially against women and children. The accountability of those who violate and abuse human rights must be ensured. All parties to the conflict must ensure safe and unhindered access for providers of humanitarian assistance. Germany commends the Governments and the peoples of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq for their support to the more than 120,000 refugees. That is why we have increased our humanitarian aid to €11.5 million.

The situation in Syria has reached a turning point. It is now urgent to work towards a political transition that will silence the weapons and give Syrians the opportunity to determine their own future. The blueprint for the transition is contained in the Annan plan and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). Such a transition has a chance to succeed only if Al-Assad steps aside, opening the way for an interim Government. In that context, it also of utmost importance that the opposition follow through on the decisions of the Syrian opposition conference, held on 2 and 3 July in Cairo, and find a unified voice.

There is not a shadow of a doubt — one day there will be a new Syria. Whether that day will be tomorrow or in weeks or months, it will come. Together with the Syrian people, we should work for a democratic Syria with religious freedom and where the rights of minorities are respected.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to an initiative of the Group of Arab States, the General Assembly today adopted resolution 66/253 B, which is aimed at finding a solution to the tragic situation in Syria. It is a resolution that might repair the damage to the United Nations credibility caused by the Security Council's inability to fulfil its responsibilities vis-à-vis the massacres being suffered by the Syrian people at the hand of its Government.

Although the resolution does not rise to the level of the measures adopted by the League of Arab States to expedite a resolution to the crisis, the results of the voting show widespread support for the resolution and send a clear message to the Syrian regime that it cannot indefinitely continue to defy the international community and to carry out crimes against humanity and serious human rights violations in all Syrian cities. Indeed, it is the last opportunity for the Syrian regime to recover its sanity and recognize that it cannot continue to rule Syria on the dead bodies of innocent people demanding their legitimate rights. By "innocent people", I mean those ordinary people who have poured into the streets by the hundreds of thousands demanding a peaceful and democratic transfer of power.

The international community cannot coexist in a landscape of destruction left by tanks and aeroplanes that are bombing civilian population centres and indiscriminately killing scores of people every day. No one can accept the constant stream of hundred of thousands of displaced Syrians forced to seek sanctuary outside Syrian territory. No one can accept the perpetration of more flagrant human rights violations.

Unfortunately, we have learned from history that despots cannot stop killing and torturing innocent people because they always believe that they are the most powerful and cannot be vanquished. They remain in the grip of that mindset until they are eventually crushed by the people and end tragically. That will be the inevitable destiny of Bashar Al-Assad.

The Syrian people have been forced to carry arms in self-defence in the face of brutal attacks by the regime's army, its security forces and pro-Government militias. The Syrian people have had no other option. In that regard, at this time, I would like to salute the Syrian people for their courage and determination to achieve victory over their torturers and to exercise their rights despite the power imbalance. Undoubtedly, the Syrian people will attain their legitimate demands and eventually emerge victorious, exactly like the Libyan people who emerged victorious against a similar tyrant.

We deeply regret that some countries continue to hide behind the principle of sovereignty and the pretext of eschewing extremism in order to provide military and political assistance to the Syrian regime, thereby

becoming accomplices to the crimes perpetrated by the regime. We hope that those States will recognize that such practices are morally inadmissible and contravene their interests in the long run.

Today the General Assembly has adopted a resolution that calls upon the Syrian regime to take concrete and specific steps. However, we doubt that the Syrian regime will respond to it, given its past record and behaviour. Therefore, the General Assembly should not stop at the mere adoption of resolution 66/253 B, but must follow up on its implementation. If the Syrian regime does not respond favourably within two or three weeks and the Security Council fails once again to fulfil its duties, it will then become imperative for the General Assembly to impose concrete sanctions against the Syrian regime, including by referring those responsible for certain crimes to the International Criminal Court and suspending the regime's membership in international organizations.

Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The crisis in Syria has now passed the 500-day mark. With the slow passing of each of those 500 days, the Syrian people have sacrificed their blood, lost some of their finest youth, endured degrading treatment and the violation of their honour, suffered through a scarcity of food — even bread — and a severe shortage of electricity and fuel for heating and cooking, witnessed the deterioration of their economy and the devaluation of their currency, and seen their country teeter on the brink of civil war. What is particularly pitiful is that those calamities have not been brought about by a major natural disaster or by a massive foreign invasion, but have all been the result of a Government choosing a policy that refuses reform, seeks to subject its people by force, and fails to uphold its responsibility for their protection.

That style of governance does not belong among civilized nations, nor does such an exclusionary authoritarian attitude have a place in the twenty-first century.

Were we to follow the logic of the Syrian regime, we would put the blame for what has befallen the country on those demanding freedom, justice and a dignified life. However, humankind rejects that fallacy and logic, with which we have been bombarded and which holds that the crisis has been caused by armed terrorist gangs and a universal conspiracy against Syria.

The fact is that the adherents of this fallacious argument have not explained to us the millions of Syrian demonstrators who have taken to the streets day after day, at thousands of protest flashpoints, putting their lives on the line. Are the Syrian people terrorists? Have those demonstrators risked their lives for a few dollars? Is yearning for freedom and insisting on human dignity now considered terrorism? Those who echo such fallacies have not explained to us why pro-freedom demonstrators have been killed and wounded, while not a single bullet has been fired on the rallies that the regime has organized in its own support. They have not explained to us the visible devastation that has befallen Syrian cities, which can only have been caused by a merciless bombardment using thousands of tons of explosives — and everyone is aware of which party possesses such weapons. They have not explained to us the daily scenes of citizens being insulted and humiliated by members of an army whose basic mission is to protect them, neither have they explained to us why foreign journalists have been denied free access in order to impartially and transparently document the events. Moreover, they have not explained to us the reason behind the cutting off of communications, electricity, water and major food supplies in areas experiencing protests. Are armed terrorist gangs the ones who have cut off the Internet and land and cellular telecommunications networks?

Assuming that all the accounts by the Syrian regime were true, why would the authorities and decision makers in Damascus insist on using the full arsenal of the Syrian army against Syrian cities, towns and villages for over 500 days, pushing the country towards a sectarian war — unless the blood of the heroic Syrian people were not dear to them?

The world is tired of those continuous repeated lies that insult our intelligence. Those who make up and spread fictional stories about the events in Syria should remember that they can fool some people some of the time, but cannot fool all people all of the time. They have to remember that they are not on the right side of history.

In the face of all that is happening in Syria, the Security Council is unable even to uphold its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations to address the Syrian crisis, and the international community is unable to offer the Syrian people anything more than statements and condemnations. We spend every day discussing formalities and theoretical principles, violence claims the lives of hundreds of innocent people in Syria.

Is not saving people, protecting their fundamental rights and dignity and establishing justice and prosperity for them among the first and most important principles for which this international Organization was established? Dwelling on debates about formalities has in the past played a role in the international community's slow response to tragedies such as the massacres in Rwanda — a mistake that we pledged not to repeat.

Faced with this situation, the General Assembly bears a moral responsibility to address the crisis, especially following the Joint Special Envoy's despair of obtaining any positive response by the Syrian regime to diplomacy and his request that the Security Council ensure the Syrian Government's compliance with its obligations.

Resolution 66/253 B, submitted by the Group of Arab States, therefore was a necessary step that could not be delayed any longer, especially in the light of the escalation in violence by the Syrian regime, which has threatened to use weapons of mass destruction and to ignite the region, as well as the worsening humanitarian situation and the flow of refugees to neighbouring countries. The resolution reflects the position of the international community and calls for a peaceful solution to the crisis based on a Syrian-led political transition process that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people and ensures accountability for those who have committed murder and violated their rights, freedoms and dignity. Such a process should also lead to the establishment of a pluralistic and democratic civil State with equal rights and freedoms. All of that must take place in a way that preserves Syria's national and territorial unity, sovereignty and stability and be in line with the principles of the United Nations.

It is ironic that the representative of Syria continues to devote his statements to haphazard accusations against other countries and to unrealistic justifications for what is happening in Syria. That is but a desperate attempt to divert attention from the reality of what is happening and to put the blame on others. That is not surprising, however, as it comes from a representative of the Syrian regime.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation seems to be the victim of a conspiracy to keep us from taking the floor. I would like to thank you, Sir, and express my appreciation to you for having given me the floor now. I take the floor on behalf of the Group of Arab States, which sponsored resolution 66/253 B, in order to address my sincere thanks to all States that voted in favour of it, thereby sending several very strong messages.

The first is a message to the people of Syria by which the Assembly says that their struggle is not far from our minds and that the international community takes a stand with the people of Syria.

The second message is that pursuing a policy by force of arms will not bear fruit; considering the people as enemies will not confer legitimacy on a regime; carrying out massacres cannot be a way to maintain the regime; and basing the competence of the President on anything other than national consensus, a feeling of satisfaction and acceptance of his authority will not produce lasting results.

The third message is directed at the Security Council and the forces that have undermined the adoption of Council resolutions. The overwhelming majority of the international community is against the positions that have been taken and requests new ones be adopted and for the Security Council to measure up to what is demanded of it and to deal with this question in a serious manner.

The final message concerns the next Joint Special Envoy; his terms of reference must be specific.

I thank the President of the General Assembly and representatives of all States that supported today's resolution. I beleive that they genuinely wanted to send a historic message of conscience.

The President: We have heard the last statement in explanation of vote following the adoption of resolution 66/253 B.

Several representatives have requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind delegations that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): The representative of the Zionist criminal regime once again used the General Assembly, deviating from the topic on the agenda, to level baseless allegations against my country.

I do not want to tax the patience of this body to reply in detail at this late hour to those nonsensical allegations. However, suffice it to say that that regime has been and remains the only destabilizing entity in the Middle East, embarking on violence and all manner

of barbaric acts for its shortsighted and narrow-minded political aims.

In the present crisis in Syria, Israeli agents — one can hear them talking in Hebrew — are actively engaged in arming and providing logistics to terrorist groups to carry out deadly operations against innocent Syrian civilians and Government institutions.

That regime's history is replete with acts of aggression, violations of international law, State terrorism and assassinations. The assassination of Iran's nuclear scientists and the cyber-sabotage perpetuated by the regime are just some examples. A regime whose only source of pride is the occupation of others' territories, the demolition of houses, the killing of innocent children and defenceless women in the most barbaric way and the commission of all types of atrocities is not in a position to talk about others, let alone to pass judgment on them.

Ms. Alkhalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to a remark made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to state the following. The forces present in the Kingdom of Bahrain are the joint forces of the Peninsula Shield Force of the Gulf Cooperation Council, deployed on the basis on an agreement concluded among members of the that body in 2000. They are there to deter any external threat.

Mr. Adi (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is indeed regrettable that we have had to listen to statements containing a torrent of mischaracterizations and falsehoods from several speakers.

In the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) there were assertions that the EU cared about the welfare of the Syrian people. Let me ask here whether the sanctions imposed by the European Union against the Syrian people fall within the scope of that concern. Does impeding access to essential basic needs required for the livelihood and well-being of the Syrian people fall within that scope? Is imposing sanctions against members of the Syrian Government within only a few days of their appointments to their positions an attempt to advance dialogue, in particular the sanctions imposed against the Minister for National Reconciliation?

The statement made by the representative of Libya included many falsehoods and baseless accusations. It is indeed regrettable that that representative has spoken about my country in such an irresponsible way. Let me remind the Libyan representative that my country did not call for outside military intervention in our country. We cannot be followers of others.

Let me quote here what Mr. Mustafa Abdel Jalil said in an interview during a Ramadan cultural event. He said, "Qatar supports Islamic trends and has an interest in establishing a system of government that is anchored in Islamic or Sharia law; no one goes to Qatar without receiving a sum of money from its Government". That is all I need to say in that regard.

In response to the representative of Qatar, we were surprised by the language he used in his statement. Listening to his statement during this plenary meeting gave one the impression of being tuned into his country's television channel. I wonder whether that representative could explain to us the reason for its financing terrorist groups. Let him explain to us who is responsible for the acts of violence and terrorism that are being committed in Syria. Could he explain to us why Qatar has been keen to discourage the opposition from dialogue and to encourage it to resort to violence, as the Amir of the State of Qatar himself did? Could he explain why his country impedes the implementation of Mr. Kofi Annan's six-point plan, judging it within only two days of its adoption as standing a 2 per cent chance of success?

Syria, as a signatory of the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, is committed to that Protocol and is willing to accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the event that Israel also accedes to it as well. Syria also has acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and supported its indefinite extension in 1995, which was extended indefinitely at the 2010 Review Conference.

Syria has always called for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In 2003, when Syria was a member of the Security Council, it submitted a draft resolution on behalf of the Arab Group for setting us such a zone. However, the countries that expressed concern about the alleged presence of those weapons are the same ones that obstructed the draft resolution and threatened to use the veto solely to protect their protégé, Israel, to which they also provided nuclear submarines. Nonetheless, Syria continued to support that draft resolution. It is regrettable that we are seeing a double standard.

If Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the secretariat of the League of Arab States were serious in their efforts, they would have emphasized the dangers posed by the Israeli nuclear threat rather than opening new fronts in the Islamic world. The representatives of Saudi Arabia and Qatar were misleading when they referred to the chemical weapons alleged to be present in Syria; they should instead have expressed concern about the chemical and nuclear arsenal possessed by Israel, which occupies Arab lands.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 34.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.